

Stockton Ports Salute Japanese-American Baseball

July 10, 2009



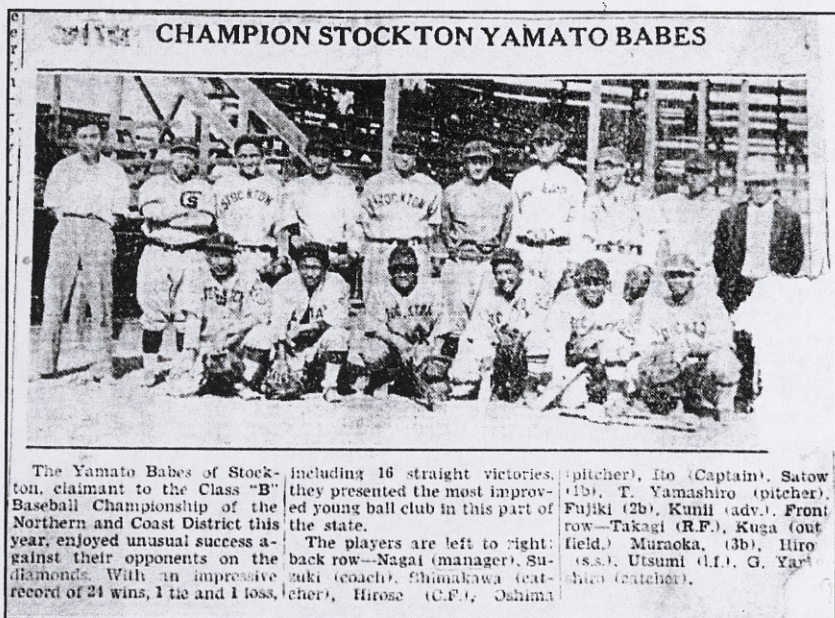
Stockton and Lodi have a rich history of Japanese-American baseball, fielding strong teams with highly talented players.

The Ports are proud to honor that history on July 10 at Japanese-American Baseball Heritage Night.

The Ports are proud to welcome former players from the Stockton Yamatos and Stockton Asahi teams, as well as Lodi teams, and to recognize their accomplishments.

The Ports are also excited to honor Satoshi "Fibber" Hirayama, a member of the 1952 Stockton Ports team and two-time All-Star for the Hiroshima Carp.

Consul General Yasumasa Nagamine is also present to honor the Stockton and Lodi teams in the pre-game ceremony.



The Stockton Yamatos team was formed in 1920 when the Yamato Athletic Club was founded. The Yamatos played at Oak Park, home of the Karl Ross American Legion team.

In 1926, the Yamatos won the Japanese State Baseball Championship title. In 1928 and 1929, the club went on a barnstorming tour of Japan and Korea, facing some of the top teams in both nations. The Yamatos also played many non-Japanese teams, including the St. Louis Cardinals, St. Louis Giants, San Francisco Seals and Sacramento Solons.

Among the players in the late 1930s and early 1940s were Frank, Teddy, and Sambo Kamibayashi, Frank Horita, Shago Muroka, Elmer and Lou Tsunekawa, George Horita and many other stars. Freddie Masai and Lou Tsunekawa were also stars on Stockton's Karl Ross American Legion team. Kenso Nushida, a Hawaiian-born player, was a standout for the Yamatos club, and signed with the Sacramento Solons in the Pacific Coast League.

The club won a Northern California Japanese Baseball League championship title in 1935, and were invited to a National Invitational Semi-Pro Baseball Tournament (pictured above). In 1941, the Stockton Yamatos captured the Northern California Japanese Baseball League title, taking the crown from their arch-rival, the Lodi Templars. The Yamato Athletic Club, which also featured a football team, disbanded following the 1941 season. The Stockton Yamato Athletic Club was inducted into the Stockton Athletic Hall of Fame in 1981.

Stockton Yamato Roster 1941 Championship Squad

Frank Arata	2B
Frank Horita	1B
Tak Horita	3B
Fred Ito	RF
Frank Kamibayashi	SS
Sam Kamibayashi	3B
Ted Kamibayashi	P/CF
Fred Masai	LF
Shago Muraoka	C
John Shimasaki	P/CF
George Uyeda	C
George Horita	Manager
Ren Yamada	Asst. Manager

Stockton Asahi Roster Circa 1960s

Don Egusa	C/OF
Steve Gotanda	1B
Ted Hayashi	OF
Dr. Craig Hisaka	LF
Don Inamasu	2B/SS
Tosh Ishihara	OF
Ken Kobayashi	P
Ron Kusama	INF/OF
Art Supnet	P/OF
Jim Tsunekawa	3B/OF
Ron Tsuruta	P
Jerry Ueda	SS/2B
Stan Ueyama	SS
Joe Yabumoto	C
Nori Yabumoto	C/OF
Wally Yamasaki	P
Roy Yoneshige	OF
Ted Yoneda	Manager/Player
Sam Yoshimura	OF
Tad Yoshimura	CF

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Lodi YMBA Templars



1940 California State Champions: (Front, l to r.) Kiichi Hiramoto (2b), George Takeuchi (ss), Johnny Hiramoto (mgr), Butch Hayashi (c), Sam Funamura (player-coach), Red Tanaka (p), Shig Kaba (of); (Back, l to r.) Nobi Matsumoto (coach), Shot Iwamura (of), Tom Ishida (1b), Bill Kagawa (p), Mas Okuhara (p), Keizo Okuhara (of), captain Matsuo Okazaki (3b).

Lodi has been the home of great Japanese-American baseball for decades. The Lodi YMA club captured three consecutive Sacramento Valley Baseball League pennants in 1931, 1932 and 1933.

The Lodi Templars were a member of the Northern California Japanese Baseball League along with the Stockton Yamatos. The team won back-to-back league titles in 1939 and 1940. In 1940, the Lodi Templars won the 1940 California State Championship, defeating the San Pedro Skippers of the Southern California Japanese Athletic Union League.

The Lodi Templars fielded such outstanding players as Tommy Ishida, Johnny and Kiichi Hiramonto, George Taekuchi and Matsuo Okazaki. In the 1940s, several Lodi players made the NCJBL All-Star Team, including "Shot" Iwamura, Red Tanaka, and Mas Okuhara. Several players were also awarded Rookie of the Year honors, including William Kagawa.

Mauch Yamashita still works to organize and coach the local Lodi Japanese-American Citizens League squad.

STOCKTON ASAHI
SACRAMENTO VALLEY NISEI LEAGUE CHAMPIONS—1962-63-64



Lf. to rt., Front row: Don Egusa, Nori Yabumoto, Stan Ueyama, Don Inamasu, Tad Yoshimura, Jerry Ueda, Ron Kusama. Back row: Craig Hisaka, Steve Gotanda, Ron Tsuruta, Ted Hayashi, Joe Yabumoto, Ken Kobayashi, Ted Yoneda. Missing from picture: Wally Yamasaki.

STOCKTON ASAHI

NAME	POS.	NO.	HOMETOWN
1.—Don Egusa	c-of		French Camp, Calif.
2.—Steve Gotanda	lb	14	Stockton, Calif.
3.—Ted Hayashi	of	23	Stockton, Calif.
4.—Craig Hisaka	lf	7	Stockton, Calif.
5.—Don Inamasu	2b	13	Stockton, Calif.
6.—Ken Kobayashi	p	22	Stockton, Calif.
7.—Ron Kusama	inf-of		Stockton, Calif.
8.—Jim Tsurukawa	3b-of	9	Stockton, Calif.
9.—Ron Tsuruta	p	13	Stockton, Calif.
10.—Jerry Ueda	inf	8	Stockton, Calif.
11.—Stan Ueyama	ss	6	Linden, Calif.
12.—Joe Yabumoto	c	25	Stockton, Calif.
13.—Nori Yabumoto	c-of	22	Stockton, Calif.
14.—Wally Yamasaki	p	1	French Camp, Calif.
15.—Tad Yoshimura	cf	3	Stockton, Calif.
Ted Yoneda, manager, player		5	Hilo, Hawaii

The Stockton Asahi Athletic Club was formed in 1961 to provide and enrich the lives of individuals through sports. The Athletic Club fielded a softball and golf team in addition to a baseball team (photographed above). The Asahi often competed at Billy Hebert Field at Oak Park.

With the encouragement and financial support of Frank and Leona Inamasu, the Asahi baseball team began playing in 1961. Players from Stockton, French Camp, Linden and Hawaii competed for the Asahi. Several Asahi players also played at Edison High School and for the Manual Rojas American Legion team. Player/manager Ted Yoneda also played at Hilo High School and University of the Pacific.

The Asahi competed in the Sacramento Nisei Valley League, and the team won League Championship titles in 1962, 1963 and 1964.